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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: UN Humanitarian Assistance Coordination
Meeting with the GOZ Officials and Donors

1. Summary. On Monday, January 13, the UN held its first coordination meeting of 2003 on Zimbabwe's humanitarian crisis among UN agencies, donors and Government of Zimbabwe (GOZ) officials. The large number of attendees included July Moyo, the Minister of Social Welfare, Labor and Public Works, David Parirenyatwa, the Minister of Health and Child Welfare, and Sithembiso Nyoni, the Minister of Small and Medium Enterprise Development. This meeting reflected a more frank discussion than had occurred in past meetings on the humanitarian issues confronting Zimbabwe and, hopefully, laid down a number of critical agenda items that can be discussed in greater depth in this forum over the coming months. End Summary.
2. The three GOZ Ministers explained their views on Zimbabwe's main humanitarian challenges for 2003. Minister Parirenyatwa listed the challenges as food security, water availability, increased malnutrition and disease, inadequate essential drugs and vaccines and insufficient equipment and staff at hospitals and clinics. Minister Nyoni listed the challenges as poverty alleviation, creating jobs, supporting people to create their own wealth and engaging young people. Comment: Neither of these two Ministers mentioned the policy environment created by the GOZ that has contributed substantially to the humanitarian crisis and that continues to impede efforts to address the crisis in an effective manner. End Comment.
3. Minister Moyo acknowledged that the GOZ has not yet met to discuss challenges for 2003. He stated that more analysis needs to be conducted on the precise impacts of the current drought and work needs to continue to refine projections regarding agricultural production for the season. He also stressed that logistical constraints continued to be a problem impeding the import of sufficient amounts of food.
4. Minister Moyo then opened the door to a more frank discussion of the humanitarian issues confronting Zimbabwe in 2003. He insisted that the GOZ should not shy away from the difficult issues. First, he said there was a need to confront allegations that the selection of beneficiaries and/or the distribution of food was done on a partisan basis. He also asserted that if Zimbabwe is to improve food security, then the GOZ and donors need to look at recovery activities in the resettlement areas, but he recognized that donors have been reluctant to work in these areas. He also acknowledged the need to discuss policy issues, such as the GOZ's monopoly in grain trading, but said that the parties could agree to disagree.
5. Ambassador Sullivan and UK High Commissioner Brian Donnelly both encouraged the Ministers present to address the policy issues that impede progress on food security. Also discussing the policy constraints, European Commission Ambassador Francesca Mosca asked innocently why the GOZ's Grain Marketing Board (GMB) could not simply put food in the supermarkets. Minister Moyo responded that in urban areas food was sold through private millers and then to supermarkets, but stated that in an environment of scarcity, some of this food was sold "through the back door." Regarding rural areas, Moyo asserted that commercial markets would not deliver food to remote regions populated by poor people and, therefore, the GOZ needed to institute a system of central control to ensure that rural areas were not denied food. Moyo also stated that this policy of central control for food distribution to rural areas was

based on the experience of other countries from which Zimbabwe had learned, but he did not indicate which countries this might be.

16. Ambassador Sullivan and High Commissioner Donnelly also encouraged the Ministers to take steps to address the international perception of partisanship and misallocations in the GOZ's food program based on widely reported incidents. Ambassador Sullivan specifically indicated that the UN's recently established Information and Verification Unit, which was verifying the proper distribution of international donor food, was available to respond to similar concerns for the GOZ's food program. The Ministers did not respond directly to this suggestion, but Ambassador Sullivan's intervention laid the groundwork for further discussion of this critical issue.

17. In a follow up meeting the next evening among UN Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator Victor Angelo, Ambassador Sullivan and USAID Director, Paul Weisenfeld, Angelo confirmed that he had fruitful discussions that morning with the Ministry of Social Welfare. The Ministry indicated a willingness to allow the UN's Information and Verification Unit to verify GMB food distribution, as long as the work was done jointly with Ministry officials. Also, the Ministry had begun to compile a list of anticipated GMB food imports for the next several weeks. Access to this information would improve coordination of GOZ and donor food distribution, particularly with respect to logistical considerations. Equally important, this information could serve as a basis for the work of the UN's Information and Verification Unit.

18. Ambassador Sullivan also emphasized to Angelo that any future donor work in resettlement areas needed to be thought through carefully and approved by major donors in advance. Ambassador Sullivan explained that humanitarian relief, such as food distribution, could be defended in resettlement areas if distributed to the most vulnerable populations with need as the operative criterion, as long as need was established on the basis of objective and verifiable indicators. Ambassador Sullivan stressed, however, that most donors would not fund agricultural recovery work in resettlement areas in the current political and economic environment.

19. Comment. While the GOZ's opening to the possibility of UN verification of GMB food deliveries is far from bankable, it likely reflects the GOZ's recognition of its inability to meet food demands or to control leakages from the GMB system due to corruption and diversion. Sullivan